

# **Journalism 302 — Spring 2016 Syllabus**

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## ***Infomania: Information Management***

Whatever you dream of doing in journalism or strategic communications, this is where you start.

Infomania is a course in finding, gathering and using information. This is a course in honing your curiosity, stoking your enthusiasm for finding answers and building your confidence as a researcher, writer and/or whatever else you aspire to be. It's about figuring out where to go when you have questions, then figuring out what to do with the answers — once you've filled your recorder with interviews, your spreadsheet with data and your notebook with ideas.

At its core, this is a class about questions. Only by crafting good questions can you find good answers. Only by using high-quality sources can you find high-quality information. With that in mind, the goal is to help you formulate questions that will help you think better, help you research better and help you analyze information better. This isn't an exercise in philosophy — it's a pursuit of knowledge, of better preparing yourself for a world awash in information both good and bad, in media both trusted and not, in resources of all kinds that you have to scrutinize if you hope to progress in this industry.

### ***You will learn to ...***

- Write clear and accurate stories.
- Understand the forms and purposes of information.
- Ask questions that help you find/interpret information and explain it clearly.
- Find information using libraries, research reports, organizations, databases, regulations, public records, experts and non-experts.
- Synthesize information from multiple sources and critically evaluate sources for credibility, accuracy and completeness.
- Develop focused plans for research projects.
- Use a variety of digital and non-digital tools to research and present information.

### ***Course materials***

- You need this book: "Don MacLeod, How to Find Out Anything" (Prentice Hall Press, 2012).

- You also need: Access to Blackboard. All assignments will be posted there and will also be used for grades and instructional videos.

## ***Class format***

Think of yourself as a consultant to a news or strategic communications organization (a news station, a branding agency, etc.). That's the role you'll play all semester while building toward the final project: to present your expertise about a particular topic to that organization. You'll recommend information and sources that the organization should use regarding that topic, as well as sources the organization should avoid.

Each assignment is designed to help you find information about your topic, evaluate the information's credibility and effectively present it. So your first task is to select the topic you want to be an expert on. You'll select it in the first two weeks of class and stick with it for the remainder of the semester. Really try to find something that interests you and motivates your curiosity.

## ***What you'll need to do to succeed***

- ***Show up***

To avoid the nonsense often associated with "excused" and "unexcused" absences, know that you have two free absences. Use your freebies for sleeping, court dates, funerals, Foo Fighters concerts or whatever. After you've used your freebies, your course grade may drop a full letter for the third absence – and a letter for every third absence following.

- ***Pay attention to the policies***

**Deadlines are, well, deadlines.** Late assignments are not accepted. Catastrophic events are the exception, but anything less than a catastrophe will earn you a zero. Even one zero could seriously alter your grade. You will be expected to begin work on assignments soon enough to contact all necessary sources or to prepare a backup story.

**Type all your assignments, unless told otherwise by the instructor.** This means no handwritten corrections on assignments prepared outside of lab.

**Turn off your phone** when you come to class. No scrolling Instagram or playing Fruit Ninja in lab.

**No student may add a journalism** class after the 20<sup>th</sup> day of a semester. Students must attend their classes and laboratory periods. Instructors may take attendance

into account in assessing a student's performance and may require a specified level of attendance, without the student's consent.

**The School of Journalism reserves** the right to cancel the enrollment of students who fail to attend the first class or lab meeting.

**Disabilities:** The University of Kansas is committed to helping all students learn. If you have a special need that may affect your learning, please contact the instructor as soon as possible. Please be aware that the KU Office of Disability Resources coordinates accommodations and services for all students who are eligible. If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted this office, please do so as soon as possible. Information about services can be found at <http://www.disability.ku.edu/~disability/>. Or you can visit the office on the first floor of Strong Hall. The phone numbers are: 785-864-2620.

**The KU Office of Student Financial Aid** is required by federal law to determine whether students who receive aid are attending each class in which they are enrolled. Instructors are required to report to that office absences of students who have stopped attending and names of those who have enrolled but never have attended. Students who do not attend classes may be required to repay federal and/or state financial aid. Students who receive any form of financial aid should learn all requirements including minimum hours of enrollment and grades to qualify for and retain that aid.

**Course materials and lectures are property** of the instructor or School of Journalism. You must obtain permission to record lectures electronically or use course materials outside this course.

**In the event of inclement weather**, KU officials make the decision to cancel classes. Call 785-864-SNOW (7669) to find out if classes have been canceled.

- ***Don't cheat***

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communication does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

**Plagiarism is stealing.** You take someone else's ideas, thoughts or words and you present them as your own original work. This includes taking ideas from written sources, such as books, as well as materials on the Internet. Cutting and pasting materials from the Internet and presenting that work as if it was your own is plagiarism. There may be times when you want to incorporate another person's ideas, opinions and words into the papers you write, to make a point or to provide background. If you do, it is essential that you attribute that information—that you explain where the information came from and give credit where credit is due. "Recycling" past assignments from other students and presenting them as your own falls into the category of plagiarism.

**Fabrication and falsification mean that you made it up.** This can include making up an entire story/source or embellishing a fact, quote or statistic to make it sound better. Don't do it. In this course, the penalty for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification is a failing grade for the semester. Additional penalties can include expulsion from the School of Journalism.

**You signed a contract of understanding** during the j-school orientation that says you know what plagiarism is and its consequences in this school. Don't be the student who has to call home and tell your parents you've been expelled.

## ***Assignments and Grading***

This is not a class where you can sit back at the start of the semester and hope to make up for lost ground at the midterm or in the second half of the semester. You really need to remain engaged week to week if you want to do well.

Total points available: 500.

- 1) Assignments: 250 points total (50 points each) -- Five throughout the semester.
- 2) News posts: 100 points total (25 points each) -- Four throughout the semester.
- 3) Final project: 100 points total -- There is no final exam. This is the grand finale.
- 4) Attendance and Participation: 50 points total.

Note: You must pass this course with a "C" (not C-minus) or better to advance in the curriculum.